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Author(s): Devin DeWeese

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Devin DeWeese

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IN 19TH-CENTURY CENTRAL ASIA:
DESCENT GROUPS LINKED TO KHWAJA
AHMAD YASAVI IN SHRINE DOCUMENTS
AND GENEALOGICAL CHARTERS

Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi, the celebrated saint of Central Asia who lived most likely in the late 12th century, is perhaps best known as a Sufi shaykh and (no doubt erroneously) as a mystical poet; his shrine in the town now known as Turkistan, in southern Kazakhstan, has been an important religious center in Central Asia at least since the monumental mausoleum that still stands was built, by order of Timur, at the end of the 14th century. While Yasavi's shrine, owing to the predilections of Soviet scholarship, was extensively studied by architectural historians and archeologists, its role in social and religious history has received scant attention; at the same time, Ahmad Yasavi's legacy as a Sufi shaykh has itself been the subject of considerable misunderstanding, resulting from two related tendencies in past scholarship: to approach the Yasavi tradition as little more than a sideline to the historically dominant Naqsh-bandiyya, and to regard it as a phenomenon definable in "ethnic" terms, as limited to an exclusively Turkic environment.¹ Even less well known in the West, however, is one aspect of Ahmad Yasavi's legacy that is of increasing significance in contemporary Central Asia, as the region's religious heritage is recovered and redefined in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse—namely, the distinctive familial communities that define themselves in terms of descent from Yasavi's family, and have historically claimed specific prerogatives associated with Yasavi's shrine.

These communities belong to the broader category of descent groups known as *khojas*, whose traditional religious and social roles, and often their very identity, were suppressed during Soviet times. They performed important social and religious functions before that era, however, and are today resurfacing, seeking not so much to recover their former privileges as to celebrate, and redefine, their communal identity and history, as well as their Islamic heritage. Even these modest aims, of course, place the *khoja* communities potentially at odds with the nation-building goals of the current Central Asian regimes. The *khoja* phenomenon appears to be rooted in a notion of genealogically derived sacrality as a basis for social cohesion, and as such, we may suggest, amounts to a living critique of the explications of "religion" and "ethnicity"

Devin DeWeese is Associate Professor, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. 47405, USA.

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that are currently in vogue among the Central Asian political, cultural, and intellectual elites. Regardless of the direction their contemporary re-emergence takes, however, these groups merit our attention. Through the focuses of their genealogical lore, their ties with specific shrine traditions, their historical connections with Sufi communities and hagiographical lore, and their religious functions in pre-revolutionary society, they mark a point of convergence for some of the most important religious currents of Islamic Central Asia.

Our knowledge of these self-defined familial groups, and of the complex social, economic, and religious processes they seem to reflect, remains rudimentary, and we cannot address here the full range of the *khoja* phenomenon, or of the *khoja* communities linked to Ahmad Yasavi. Our aim here, rather, is to suggest that we may substantially improve our understanding of these groups through a re-evaluation of important documentary materials that appear to have originated among them. These documentary materials include genealogical texts preserved among the sacred lineages, as well as other documents pertaining to the shrine of Ahmad Yasavi. Among the latter is one text that may serve as a convenient starting point for our discussion, insofar as it links, or sought to link, a particular family claiming administrative rights at Yasavi's shrine with the figure responsible for the imposing structure that marks the shrine—Timur himself.

THE WAQFIYYA ASCRIBED TO TIMUR

The documentary legacy associated with the shrine of Ahmad Yasavi reportedly includes a substantial number of documents from the late 18th and especially the 19th century, reflecting primarily the shrine's patronage by the khans of Qoqand, who ruled Turkistan from around 1819 until the Russian conquest in 1864. Very few of these have been studied or published.² Far more familiar, if little better studied, is a waqf charter for Yasavi's shrine supposedly prepared on behalf of Timur himself, and thus datable to the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century.³

The waqf document ascribed to Timur came to light just over a century ago, in the late summer of 1897, and within four years the original Persian text as well as a full Russian translation, both prepared by A. A. Divaev, had been published.⁴ Since then Divaev's text and translation have often been cited as if based on an authentic document from the time of Timur. They have been used as sources on the history and administration of the Yasavi shrine complex,⁵ and, more generally, on the economic history of southern Kazakhstan,⁶ typically without even raising the question of whether the document was what it purported to be. Even Bartol'd, though he noted that the text (and especially the translation) demanded a new and more careful edition and commentary, seems to have accepted its essential authenticity, and cited it as evidence on toponyms in the vicinity of Turkistan.⁷ There were occasional skeptics: A. A. Semenov hinted at his suspicions about the text published by Divaev,⁸ while V. A. Gordlevskii, in an important study of Yasavi's shrine published in 1932, declared the document a fake.⁹

In 1948, O. D. Chekhovich published a brief descriptive survey of the collection of Islamic documents preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent. Having

examined the original document itself, Chekhovich pronounced it “a crude forgery,” noting that its “watery reddish ink” is never found in authentic documents, and that its golden seal actually affixed to a different piece of paper glued onto the margins where other tears had been repaired.¹⁰ Chekhovich also noted the circumstances of the document’s acquisition to suggest its inauthentic character—it had been presented, after all, to the military governor of Syr-Darya *oblast’* by a group of inhabitants of Turkistan along with a request that the waqf for Yasavi’s shrine be restored—but she did not discuss the identities of those who presented the document (they are not specified in the only published account of its presentation), or discuss its stipulations.

To Chekhovich’s critique of the document might be added other arguments based on its contents and style. It largely ignores the standard formulas of authentic waqfiyyas, exhibits 19th-century orthography and toponymy, refers to the town where the shrine is located as “Turkistan” rather than “Yasi” (the name by which the town was known into the 17th century), and as published even includes at the end a poem about Timur’s dates (in which the wrong year is given for his birth). Nevertheless, the document has continued to be discussed—always on the basis of Divaev’s text and translation—as an authentic waqf document from the time of Timur, even since Chekhovich issued her opinion, which remained either unknown or ignored. In recent times, with the renewed attention in post-Soviet Central Asia to Yasavi’s shrine (and to Timur), the document’s authenticity is simply assumed, without discussion, in a spate of popular publications.

It is of course conceivable that the document in question is at least a late copy based ultimately on a hypothetical original dating indeed from the time of Timur. That not even this much of its authenticity is likely to be salvageable, however, is strongly suggested by one element in the document’s contents that has not drawn significant attention. This key element is the ancestry of the individual designated in the text as the shrine’s trustee (*mutavalli*), who was to appoint all other officials and was to enjoy total financial control over the waqf: this post is given to Mir-^cAli Khwaja Shaykh, son of Hasan Shaykh, expressly because he was a descendant of “Sadr Shaykh” or “Sadr al-Din Khwaja,” identified as the brother of Ahmad Yasavi, with the additional stipulation that the post be passed down among his male descendants.¹¹

As we will see, quite early though relatively little-known sources do indeed mention a brother of Ahmad Yasavi named “Sadr Shaykh,” and in this we might find evidence in support of the waqfiyya’s authenticity. However, the attention devoted in the document to the hereditary privileges of the descendants of Ahmad Yasavi’s brother Sadr Shaykh in itself suggests that real or claimed descendants of Sadr Shaykh through Mir-^cAli Khwaja, living in Turkistan in the 19th century, were among those who handed over the document as they petitioned the Russian official. To confirm the likelihood of this scenario, and to understand why the document privileges descendants of Ahmad Yasavi’s brother rather than those of the shaykh himself, we may first review another type of document, of which several examples have come to light in recent years. Many of these texts, though not cast as waqfiyyas, share with the waqf document ascribed to Timur not only claims to specific hereditary property rights, but also a focus on descent from the brother of Ahmad Yasavi.

GENEALOGICAL CHARTERS LINKED TO AHMAD YASAVI'S
LINEAGE

The texts in question are brief genealogical works (*nasab-nāmas*) preserved among specific familial groups in southern Kazakhstan and parts of Uzbekistan who define themselves in terms of descent from saintly ancestors.¹² Such texts were virtually unheard of in Soviet times, but the end of Soviet anti-religious pressure has facilitated the uncovering and publication of several such *nasab-nāmas*. As noted, many of these texts focus on natural lineages traced back to a brother of Ahmad Yasavi named Sadr Shaykh, as in the waqfiyya ascribed to Timur. In the most substantial of the *nasab-nāmas*, however, we hear nothing of Mir ʿAli Khwaja; instead, descent is traced to Sadr Shaykh through the figure portrayed in the text itself as the author of the *nasab-nāma*, Sadr Shaykh's grandson, "Safi al-Din ʾÜrüng-quylaqi," among whose putative descendants the text was transmitted and augmented with new genealogical material. One version of this ʾÜrüng-quylaqi *nasab-nāma* was published in Turkistan in 1992.¹³ Texts of other copies have been published more recently,¹⁴ and further genealogical texts of a similar type have begun to come to light.¹⁵

The discovery and analysis of these texts, of which many more examples undoubtedly remain in private hands, is indeed a real service. It marks the resurfacing of local genealogical and religious traditions driven underground in the Soviet era. However, their discoverers have so far approached these texts in isolation and have treated them as straightforward products of, for example, the 13th century, written down by Ahmad Yasavi's grandnephew himself, and as straightforward, reliable genealogical records. While there may indeed be some quite old traditions reflected in these texts, they are preserved only in 19th- and 20th-century copies, and for textual and stylistic reasons they cannot be meaningfully ascribed to a substantially earlier period. Most, for example, include quite clear genealogical supplements following one specific lineage or another down to the 19th or 20th century.

Most of these texts' contents, moreover, seem clearly to have been drawn from a Yasavi doctrinal work datable to the 14th century, written by Ishaq Khwaja, the son of Ismaʿil Ata, who belonged to a little-known Sufi *silsila* traced back to Ahmad Yasavi. This 14th-century work, to begin with, already supplies the lineage of Ahmad Yasavi's brother, Sadr Shaykh, through two subsequent generations: Sadr Shaykh had two sons, first ʿAbd al-Malik, who had a son named "ʿAbdal ʿAli," and second, Danishmand Khwaja, whose son was "Safi al-Din." Danishmand Khwaja, moreover (and implicitly his son, as well) was known as "ʾÜrüng-quylaqi."¹⁶ It is undoubtedly significant that the *nasab-nāma* includes this much, but no more, of this genealogy, tracing the further lineage of "Safi al-Din ʾÜrüng-quylaqi" himself through a series of names recognizable as mere genealogical place-holders.

The 14th-century work, moreover, also includes a substantial narrative of Central Asia's Islamization, focused on the activity of a warrior saint called Ishaq Bab, of whom Ahmad Yasavi and his brother were portrayed as descendants.¹⁷ The same tale of Islamization forms the bulk of the ʾÜrüng-quylaqi *nasab-nāma*, but the narrative was in fact quite freely adapted in many other contexts beyond the framework of these genealogies, allowing us to understand the inclusion of this material in the ʾÜrüng-quylaqi *nasab-nāma* as yet another variation to an old narrative theme. The

genealogical variation on this narrative, furthermore, clearly signals the likely motivation of those who incorporated it: nearly all the material in the *nasab-nāmas* that does not coincide with material known from the work of Ishaq Khwaja ibn Ismaʿil Ata concerns either the later genealogical elaboration itself or specific claims to hereditary property rights in the middle Syr Darya basin. In the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi *nasab-nāma*, various lands are identified as having belonged to the Islamizing saint Ishaq Bab, and the enjoyment of legal rights to them by Safi al-Din Ürüŋ-quylaŋi and his descendants is defended on the basis of their ancestor Ishaq Bab's role in their Islamization (through conquest and the establishment of mosques), and in their irrigation and revivification. The *nasab-nāmas* insist that no one else may make claims on these lands so long as the descendants of Ishaq Bab through the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi lineage look after the needs of those who come seeking hospitality.

The emphasis on property rights suggests that these genealogical texts, though less formal than the waqfiyya ascribed to Timur, were certainly used, and most likely created (out of a wide range of materials), for the purpose of bolstering claims to property rights or administrative prerogatives on behalf of specific descent groups. The later genealogical material included in the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi *nasab-nāma*, and its multiple variations, suggests the presence in what is now southern Kazakhstan, in the 19th century at least, of distinct familial groups claiming descent from Ahmad Yasavi's brother Sadr Khwaja. This in itself allows us to propose such groups as likely candidates for the formulation and presentation of the waqf document ascribed to Timur. The fact that both the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi *nasab-nāma* and the waqf document ascribed to Timur "confirm" the rights of descendants of Ahmad Yasavi's brother, however, should not be taken as evidence of a broad consensus regarding either Yasavi's familial legacy or specific groups' rights, for undoubtedly different groups with different interests are signaled in the intermediate figures mentioned in the respective texts (i.e., Mir ʿAli Khwaja and Safi al-Din). The genealogical text, for example, explicitly portrays Ahmad Yasavi "adopting" Safi al-Din as his son, thereby making descendants of Safi al-Din descendants of Yasavi as well, and this implication of a closer relationship with Ahmad Yasavi might well have been targeted against the very party that advanced its prerogatives at Yasavi's shrine on the basis of descent from the saint's brother.

Indeed, the diversity of these putative descent groups and their claims is evidenced by the diversity of the genealogical charters they sponsored. Texts quite similar to the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi *nasab-nāma*, for instance, include the narrative of Islamization but trace the relevant genealogy to one of Ishaq Bab's companions, thus "branching" from the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi lineage quite early. Other texts present genealogies branching many generations after Safi al-Din Ürüŋ-quylaŋi, suggesting a relatively large number of descent groups sharing Ürüŋ-quylaŋi origins (or merely the usefulness and convenience of adopting the early generations of the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi lineage). But still others, while following a lineage back to Ahmad Yasavi's brother, omit the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi lineage altogether, or even provide a different name for Yasavi's brother. For example, one unpublished *nasab-nāma* highlights a non-Ürüŋ-quylaŋi lineage portrayed as descending from Yasavi's brother. This version includes the narrative of Islamization, but in tracing descent from Yasavi's brother Sadr Shaykh follows the lineage of Sadr Shaykh's other son, ʿAbd al-Malik, and makes no mention of Danishmand

Khwaja, Safi al-Din, or the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi *nisba*. Another genealogical tradition, this one recorded orally, is focused on a *third* son of Yasavi's brother Sadr Shaykh (this is the tradition about Baqsayis Ata, discussed later), while yet another text, recently published in Kazakhstan, likewise traces the pivotal lineage back to Ahmad Yasavi's brother, but identifies that brother as Isma'il Ata and asserts property claims near Turkistan for his descendants.¹⁸ Yet another tradition, recorded in the late 19th century in Tashkent, traces a family's descent to "Khwaja Muhammad Danishmand," brother of "Khwaja Malik Ata," clearly echoing the names found in the Ürüŋ-quylaŋi genealogy. It portrays these two figures as sons of Ahmad Yasavi himself, however, and thus casts Yasavi as the ancestor of a family linked more typically with Shaykh Khavand-i Tahir, a prominent saint of Tashkent.¹⁹ A quite different lineage, finally, is reflected in another example of a genealogy combined with claims of administrative prerogatives preserved in a 19th-century historical work known much longer than the *nasab-nāmas* now coming to light. This lineage is traced through Arslan Baba, a figure typically cast as Ahmad Yasavi's spiritual teacher.²⁰

If we compare all these texts, including the waqfiyya ascribed to Timur, we may begin to understand all of them as reflecting the same essential pattern in compilation and motivation: they were probably compiled on the basis of existing genealogical lore, oral or written, with echoes of names or personalities known from regional narrative traditions or from local shrines, with the aim of establishing specific rights their compilers wished to have confirmed by authorities of a new regime (Bukharan, Qoqandian, or Russian). This pattern most likely points to the later 19th century as the time when these texts were given the form in which we have them, but in any event suggests that all such texts, though undoubtedly preserving fragments of much older information, are not what they purport to be.

In any case, the emphasis in most of these texts upon the prerogatives assured by descent from Ahmad Yasavi's brother (however that brother may be identified), including the "Timurid" *waqf-nāma*'s claim that only descendants of that brother had the right to manage Yasavi's shrine, stands in sharp contrast to a very different set of traditions associated with the actual administration of Ahmad Yasavi's shrine during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To understand those other traditions, and to further strengthen our supposition about the origins and motivations of both sets of traditions, we must briefly review what we know, and when we know it, about Ahmad Yasavi's familial legacy.

TRADITIONS ABOUT AHMAD YASAVI'S FAMILIAL LEGACY

We have virtually no early and reliable information about Ahmad Yasavi's actual family or descendants. A review of written hagiographical and doctrinal sources produced within circles linked to the Yasavi legacy, however, does allow us to discern several layers of the familial lore about Ahmad Yasavi, based on the period in which specific elements of the stories about his family first appear. This type of tradition, of course, might have circulated for generations without being reduced to writing, and our sources are at best sparse. With these qualifications we can note the following general sequence.

The earliest tradition to be recorded appears in the 14th-century work of Ishaq Khwaja ibn Ismaʿil Ata. The passage from this work cited earlier identifies Ahmad Yasavi's father as a certain "Ibrahim," who had two sons, Ahmad himself and Sadr Shaykh, and as noted follows the latter son's lineage down for two generations, including "Safi al-Din Ürüŋ-quylaŋi." While we might see in this early attestation of Sadr Shaykh evidence of the priority of claims made by descendants of Yasavi's brother, what the work of Ishaq Khwaja actually confirms is the antiquity of a genealogical tradition that was available, in textual form, to be borrowed and appropriated for other purposes. With this in mind it is no doubt significant that we hear no more about Sadr Shaykh or his descendants in any source until the first half of the 18th century, when a Central Asian compendium of various ʿAlid and other genealogies mentions, in passing, the tradition that Ahmad Yasavi had a brother named Sadr Khwaja.²¹

The next layer in the familial lore about Ahmad Yasavi can be dated only to the late 16th century, and is preserved in the *Javāhir al-abrār* (which served as M. F. Köprülü's chief and often only source on the Yasavi Sufi tradition). According to this work, Yasavi's father, Ibrahim, and his mother, ʿAʿisha Khatun, had two children: Ahmad himself and his older sister, Gawhar-Shahnaz.²² No mention is made of a brother or of a brother's descendants, and indeed this 16th-century work says nothing more about Yasavi's sister. Indeed, the only other echo of a tradition about Yasavi's sister is found in a 17th-century Yasavi hagiography,²³ which identifies one of Ahmad Yasavi's disciples, ʿAshiq Yusuf, as the son of Yasavi's sister, who is not named. The *Javāhir al-abrār* does, however, mention another key element in the familial lore about Ahmad Yasavi, one shared with the 14th-century work by Ishaq Khwaja ibn Ismaʿil Ata noted earlier and confirmed also in a 15th-century work produced outside the Yasavi tradition. These works agree that Ahmad Yasavi's son was murdered by Yasavi's enemies while just a young boy. The *Javāhir al-abrār*, alone among these sources, adds that Yasavi then gave his daughter in marriage to his son's killer²⁴ (we can ignore here the non-genealogical implications of this seemingly strange consequence of the murder of Yasavi's son), thus allowing the possibility of direct descendants of Ahmad Yasavi through his daughter; no reference is made to such descendants in this work, however.

The story of the murder of Yasavi's son, especially when linked with a reference to his daughter, seems to have shaped the common understanding, prevalent at least in circles linked to the Yasavi Sufi tradition, that Ahmad Yasavi had no descendants through any male offspring. However, beginning from the early 16th century, we find scattered incidental reports in historical and biographical sources, from Central Asia and beyond, of individuals identified as descendants of Ahmad Yasavi; none of these reports ever indicates whether these "descendants" might have in fact traced their ancestry to a brother or sister of Yasavi, nor do they ever say anything about descent through a son or daughter of Yasavi. It is noteworthy, furthermore, that we hear only of *individuals* identified as descendants of Yasavi, for from the same period we have countless references to recognized descent groups, including many linked with the Yasavi Sufi tradition, whose appellations became familial *nisbas*. We hear of groups called Ismaʿil Ataʿi, Zangi Ataʿi, Sayyid Ataʿi, Badr Ataʿi, Usulluq Ḥasan Ataʿi (all derived from the names of Yasavi saints), and these terms clearly refer to

distinct communities defined in terms of their descent from these saints, but we never hear, in this period, of Ahmad Yasavi's descendants spoken of as a distinct community, or grouped implicitly by the use of a familial *nisba*.

It is not until the first half of the 18th century, again in that Central Asian genealogical compendium mentioned earlier, that we find our first explicit statement that Yasavi had a daughter through whom descent was traced to him. The brief passage in this source says only that Ahmad Yasavi had a daughter named Jamila, whom he gave in marriage to a certain Khwaja ^cAli Khwaja, evidently one of his disciples; "they had a son, named Sa^cdan Khwaja, and their descendants will continue until the Day of Resurrection."²⁵ The latter tradition, finally, has evidently been refined somewhat in the latest layer we can trace in the familial lore about Ahmad Yasavi, which appears only in popular traditions recorded at the Yasavi shrine complex in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These affirm that Ahmad Yasavi had a daughter, named "Khushnaz" or "Gawhar Khushtaj"—a name undoubtedly borrowed from the same stock of traditions that assigned a very similar name to Yasavi's sister in the 16th century (which itself may well reflect even older narrative layers)—and that this daughter married "^cAli Khwaja." Yasavi's daughter and son-in-law were identified, further, as the ancestors of specific descent groups in the late 19th and 20th centuries. In these traditions, specific shrines in Turkistan were identified as those of Yasavi's daughter and son-in-law; the shrine of "Gawhar Ana" is mentioned in the early 20th century and has recently been refurbished, while that of "^cAli Khwaja Ata," though its site is still shown, was bulldozed in Soviet times.

More important for present purposes, the traditions about Yasavi's daughter, Gawhar Ana, and son-in-law, ^cAli Khwaja, come down to us already in the context of identifying the administrators of the Yasavi shrine complex. They are portrayed as ancestors of the rightful administrators, a depiction clearly at odds with the stipulations of the waqf document ascribed to Timur—where, we may recall, the pivotal post was that of *mutavallī*, to be filled by a descendant of Yasavi's brother, Sadr Shaykh. To understand these discrepancies, we must consider the accounts we have of the relationship between Yasavi's supposed familial legacy and the administrative structure of his shrine complex.

FAMILIAL DISPUTES OVER YASAVI'S SHRINE IN 19TH-CENTURY TURKISTAN

Our best descriptions of the administrative structure and organization of the Yasavi shrine complex, and of the district surrounding Turkistan, come from the early 20th century, and in some cases reflect the situation already in Soviet times, though before the wholesale assault on religious institutions during the late 1920s. These descriptions link the shrine administration with a tradition of natural descent from Ahmad Yasavi through his daughter.

According to one of the most thorough accounts, that of V. A. Gordlevskii published in 1932, the officials at Yasavi's shrine in Turkistan were of three types, bearing the titles "*azler*" (a contraction of ^c*azīz-lār*, the Turkic plural of a common term for a saint), "*naqīb*," and "*shaykh al-islām*." All three considered themselves descendants of Ahmad Yasavi through his daughter, Gawhar Khushtaj (or Khushnaz), and her husband,

²⁶Ali Khwaja Ata. This is essentially the same picture described in current lore associated with Yasavi's shrine, which however specifically applies the designations *azler*, *naqib*, and *shaykh* to familial groups, and traces their ancestry to three grandsons of Yasavi's daughter named Azler, Naqib, and Shaykh. Today, of course, in the aftermath of the Soviet-era liquidation of all waqf properties and the transformation of Yasavi's shrine into a museum, these three groups play no role in the administration of the shrine, but are accorded distinct roles in preserving the legacy of Ahmad Yasavi.

Gordlevskii's account, by contrast, describes the role these three groups played in the "spiritual" organization of the shrine and of the entire district surrounding Turkistan.²⁷ Each of twelve village centers near the town was led by an *azler*, who ensured that each district supplied the shrine with its assigned contribution, termed *kharāj*. Each local *azler* was held to be descended from the *Ata* whose name was borne by the village (and its irrigation canal), and all of them were subordinate to the *azler* of Turkistan itself, who would summon them to *zikr* ceremonies at the shrine. The *azler* of Turkistan, as well as the *naqib* and the *shaykh al-islām*, also served as "officials" in the town of Turkistan and had strictly assigned functions and seating places in ceremonial protocol at the shrine as well.²⁸ All three types of officials in Turkistan, in turn, maintained residences in, and derived income from, specific outlying villages. The income of the three groups, however, had significantly declined, according to Gordlevskii, who claimed that even before the Russian conquest of Turkistan, half of the waqf properties that had supported them had been dissolved; only "the God-fearing *azler* of the villages still deliver what is due from them." He further affirms that the *azler*, as "representatives of dervishism," had preserved their positions in Turkistan longer than the other groups. The *shaykh al-islām*, Gordlevskii writes, was displaced by appointed judges (he refers to the *qāzīs* installed during the era of Qoqandian rule), while the *naqib*'s position in particular was undermined by "the dissipation of the rich waqfs."

Gordlevskii also called attention to the sharp difference between the organizational structure marked by these three classes of officials and the administration set forth in the waqf document ascribed to Timur.²⁹ Gordlevskii regarded the latter document as clearly a fake, but did not comment further on the relationship among the three types of officials he found in Turkistan and the post of *mutavallī* established in "Timur's" document. A slightly earlier account of Yasavi's shrine by the Russian architectural historian M. E. Masson, however, included in its brief history of the shrine the following revealing passage:³⁰ "In the 1840s, at the beginning of Khudayar Khan's reign, the post of *mutavallī* at the *mazār* was abolished. For the administration of affairs the new posts of *shaykh al-islām*, *shaykh-azīzlār*, and *shaykh-naqib* were established, and the direct descendants of Khwaja Ahmad's brother Sadr Shaykh were completely excluded from participation in them, whereby one of the conditions of Timur's *waqf-nāma* was violated." Masson makes it clear that he accepted the authenticity of the waqf document ascribed to Timur but does not explicitly link the three posts that replaced the *mutavallī* with descent from Yasavi's daughter, or allude to any actual quarrels about the shrine's administration. Unfortunately, he does not indicate his source for describing this administrative shift.

In all likelihood, Masson's source was a much less well-known Russian description of the towns of the Syr Darya valley published in 1912 by A. I. Dobrosmyslov. In this work we find a much more vivid, if partisan, account of the disputes between

putative descendants of Yasavi's daughter and putative descendants of Yasavi's brother. In his account,³¹ Dobrosmyslov quite openly takes the side of the putative descendants of Sadr Shaykh, with whom he seems to have been on good terms. He clearly accepts Timur's waqf document as authentic, affirming that since Timur's time "all *khāns* and *amīrs* who have ruled Turkistan have considered it their sacred duty to confirm the privileges given by Amir Timur to the descendants of Sadr Shaykh, and have always appointed *mutavallīs* themselves." Noting, however, that time had dissipated the waqf and had likewise "destroyed the will of the iron *amīr*," Dobrosmyslov says that "under Qoqandian rule the direct descendants of Sadr Shaykh were removed from the duties of *mutavallī* and replaced by second-degree *khojas* from a collateral line. This happened, as is evident from the documents possessed by Ata-Khan-Khoja Oskar-Khodzhinov, in the first years of Khudayar Khan's reign, i.e., in the 1840s.^[32] In the course of this replacement, the very title of *mutavallī* was abolished as well, and the three posts of *shaykh al-islām*, *shaykh-ʿazīzlār*, and *shaykh-naqīb*, to whom were entrusted administration of the affairs of the mosque of Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi, were established." The first *shaykh al-islām*, the account continues, was the grandfather of "Iskhak-Khodzha Apzal-Khodzhinov," who held the post when Dobrosmyslov wrote and was a descendant of one of Sadr Shaykh's collateral lines—"and, if I am not mistaken, of a female line, which according to the instructions of Timur did not have the right to administer the properties" connected with Yasavi's shrine. (Dobrosmyslov further links the administrative reform with the wish of the Qoqandian rulers to "strengthen the Kazak population of the Qoqandian and Russian regions neighboring on Turkistan in Islam," without indicating how the shift would have served that purpose.)

The removal of the direct descendants of Sadr Shaykh from the management of affairs at Yasavi's shrine led, writes Dobrosmyslov, to "a persistent struggle between the shaykhs who were removed and those who held power, a struggle that has not ceased even today."³³ He continues: "The descendants of the removed shaykhs apparently possess all the documents confirming their rights to pre-eminence at the shrine of the holy Ahmad, for which reason the present masters of the mosque's affairs have tried by various means to take these documents from them; they even resorted to the assistance of Iman-Berdi, the Kazak-Qīpchaq, one of the Turkistani *beks*, by whose order both hands of Oskar-Khodzha, claimant to the title of *shaykh al-islām*, were cut off 60 years ago [i.e., ca. 1852], for not surrendering old documents from the khans. Fights between adherents of the two parties are a quite common occurrence. The present claimant to the post of *shaykh al-islām*, Ata-Khan-Khodzha Oskar-Khodzhinov [evidently the grandson of the man whose hands were cut off] is 58 years old and a thoroughly respectable, quite literate and well-read man by comparison with the reigning shaykhs, who are barely literate folks unacquainted with Muslim theological literature."³⁴ Dobrosmyslov alludes, finally, to the wider advantages enjoyed by the unworthy holders of the three posts: "Upon our capture of Turkistan, the *khojas* dwelling in this town, who now number not less than 100 families, sought to be freed from paying taxes, as descendants of the righteous Caliph ʿAli, but they did not succeed in achieving this, and only the three governing shaykhs, who do not pay taxes even still, were exempted."

We have no way of knowing, so far, whether Masson and Dobrosmyslov were correct in dating the administrative shift—from the post of *mutavallī*, filled by a descendant

of Sadr Shaykh, to the three posts filled by descendants of Yasavi's daughter—to the 1840s. That date is somewhat problematical, to judge from the still quite limited number of 19th-century documents relating to Yasavi's shrine that have been published up to now,³⁵ and it is possible that Masson and Dobrosmyslov reached their conclusion on the basis of a small, and partisan, documentary repertoire. However, the “reformed” system evidently prevailed at the time of the Russian seizure of Turkistan. Dobrosmyslov cites the text of the order issued by the victorious Russian commander, Colonel N. A. Verevkin, on 15 June 1864, three days after the town's surrender, establishing a Chief Administrative Council that would consist of the *sheikh-ul-islam*, Nasrulla-Khodzha-Iskhakov (presiding); the *azizliar* Sherif-Khodzha Beibutov; and the *naqyb* Allakber-Khodzha Khan-Khodzhinov.³⁶ The same three men, in the same three positions, are mentioned in the earliest detailed description we have of the Yasavi shrine complex, published by Bekchurin in 1866.³⁶ The *shaykh al-islām* named in both accounts is evidently the father or grandfather of the *shaykh al-islām* noted by Dobrosmyslov. Bekchurin's description, moreover, is of particular significance for its account of the shrine's staff.³⁸ He says nothing of a *mutavallī* or of a waqf charter from the time of Timur.

It seems clear, then, that the administrative shift was indeed accomplished well before the Russian conquest of Turkistan. It is possible that a more thorough study of the shrine's documentary legacy may clarify the situation. In the meantime, we have one quite curious, earlier report of a conflict between two groups, one claiming descent directly from Yasavi (his daughter is not mentioned) and the other claiming descent from his brother. In this case the issue is again the right to represent Ahmad Yasavi's legacy, though not his shrine. The story was told by a Polish traveler through the Kazak steppe in 1846, who described a dispute between a *khodzha* who had come from Tashkent, with various “relics” from “Azret,” and “two other charlatans” who came later, armed with the Qur'an and their own stock of relics from “Azret.” The first *khodzha*, who is said to have claimed to be a direct descendant of “Azret-sultan,” cursed the newcomers (“for having assumed the right to deceive the Kazaks”) and demanded that they depart, and the argument that ensued grew so heated that the two newcomers had to be arrested to break it up. Upon investigation, the two newcomers, a father and son, produced a document “written in Persian and testifying to the father's descent from the brother of Azret-sultan.”³⁹

The accounts of Masson and Dobrosmyslov, especially, provide a quite clear rationale for the formulation in the middle of the 19th century of documents asserting hereditary privileges by putative descendants of either Sadr Shaykh or Yasavi's daughter (or both). It does not seem unlikely, indeed, that the family traditions focused on the daughter and brother of Ahmad Yasavi took shape primarily as discursive weapons in ongoing legal and administrative disputes between two distinct communities whose “original” links with the Yasavi tradition, and with the Yasavi shrine, must remain unknowable. Perhaps their links were indeed simply hereditary, and their conflict was rooted in their authentically distinct lineages. Or perhaps these links reflect a more complex process of communal formation, as suggested later. Without access to the fuller documentary legacy associated with Yasavi's shrine we cannot say for certain which group might have asserted its claims first, or trace any further conflicts between the lineages, but in any case we may imagine two (or more)

parties contending for recognition by the new Qoqandian government as the rightful heirs to economic and administrative rights at Yasavi's shrine. The explicit exclusion of Sadr Shaykh's descendants from the new posts suggests that the "Timurid" *waqf-nāma* had been presented first but had been rejected, although conversely we may suppose that a merely customary monopoly on the post of *mutavallī* enjoyed by a family claiming descent from Sadr Shaykh had been undone by the new government's favor to other families, thus requiring that a more tangible documentary stipulation of that monopoly be drawn up (and be attributed to the figure most closely associated with the establishment of the shrine, Timur himself—with whom, incidentally, the Qoqandian dynasty, unlike the Chingisid khans of the Kazaks or indeed any other Central Asian rulers with interests in the region of Turkistan from the 16th to 19th centuries, claimed genealogical ties).⁴⁰ We may even suppose that the apparent "attack" on the rights and status of self-styled descendants of Sadr Shaykh was a factor in the formulation and circulation of a *nasab-nāma* asserting the property rights of another group claiming descent from Sadr Shaykh—namely, the *nasab-nāma* ascribed to Safi al-Din Ūrüng-quylaqi.

It is of some further interest, despite the small sampling we have, that Russian scholars and officials appear to have been inclined to take the side of the "dispossessed" descendants of Yasavi's brother against the actual holders of the official posts at the shrine, and to accept the legitimacy of the *waqfiyya* ascribed to Timur. To the views of Masson and Dobrosmyslov, we may add the comments of E. T. Smirnov, to whom the governor-general had handed over the *waqfiyya* in 1897 following its presentation by the natives of Turkistan. Smirnov sharply criticized the native administration of the Yasavi shrine for pocketing the proceeds of the shrine's endowments while neglecting the building's maintenance and repair.⁴¹ We may suppose that the discovery of a *waqf* document purporting to show that those who then administered the Yasavi shrine were not even entitled to that privilege, and one that explicitly enjoined the administrators of the *waqf* to ensure the repair of the building (which Smirnov described as "one of the most magnificent and beautiful monuments from the age of Tamerlane") may have found ready acceptance among Russian scholars and officials who were in many cases already contemptuous of native society and its seeming indifference to its antiquities.

Today, traditions about the *azler*, *naqīb*, and *shaykh* families descended from Yasavi's daughter are being revived alongside the genealogical traditions of particular descent groups tracing their ancestry to Yasavi's brother, or to other saints linked with Yasavi's legacy. There is as yet no evidence of any hostility among these familial groups, or even of a memory of past disputes. Undoubtedly, this is due in part to the severe pressures on religiously linked groups during the Soviet era, which suppressed or diluted local knowledge of familial and religious traditions. But at the same time, it must be noted that the Soviet state also eliminated the lucrative stakes—control of the shrine and of land and water rights—that had no doubt fueled the conflicts in earlier times. In any event, despite the altered situation in Turkistan, the argument we are proposing about the motives underlying the formulation and circulation of the documents reviewed here—all of which combine genealogical claims with assertions of economic prerogatives—has broader implications that go beyond the resolution of a few historical puzzles, and we turn to a brief review of some of these.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE FAMILIAL “DOCUMENT WARS”

To begin with, understanding the environment that produced both the waqf document ascribed to Timur and the various *nasab-nāmas* will be important as further examples of such texts are discovered, and as the actual documentary material connected with the Yasavi shrine is made accessible. Up to now, none of the discussions of the waqfiyya or of the *nasab-nāmas* have taken account of the other type of text; nor have they taken account of the other evidence that helps place the textual material in context. Neither type of material can be fruitfully studied in isolation, however, and the mere publication of either type of material, without critical analysis, may do more harm than good. We cannot discount the possibility that earlier documents will be brought to light that appear to confirm the claims of one side or another, but even in such a case, we will do well to remember that what earlier documents reveal may well be only earlier examples of the document wars that we see more clearly in the 19th and 20th centuries. After all, the region of Turkistan changed hands frequently enough from the 15th to 19th centuries to offer ample opportunity for claimants to various privileges to seek confirmation of their rights. Even earlier documents, then, may reveal more about the groups or individuals who succeeded in getting their claims confirmed by a new ruler or new regime than about the “rightful” or “original” disposition of administrative or proprietary prerogatives.

Especially with regard to the genealogical material, moreover, we must recognize that the texts are much less interesting if they are what they purport to be. If they are “authentic” in a narrow sense, they provide only a list of the names of Ahmad Yasavi’s, or some other saint’s, ancestors or descendants, among which no more than two or three can be linked with historically identifiable personages. We gain little if we learn simply that Ahmad Yasavi’s ninth ancestor, or ninth descendant, was named Musa Shaykh. If the genealogies were fabricated, however, they compel us to seek the motivations for their formulation, and they are of enormous interest for the clues they may offer with regard to social and economic history. I will return to this issue shortly.

The conclusions drawn here may also offer insight into the ways in which genealogical and hagiographical lore is constructed and transmitted. If we examine more broadly the hagiographical literature and familial lore connected with the Yasavi tradition, for instance, we find many examples of what can best be understood as the differential use of a rather limited repertoire of names. That is, we often find the same names recurring in different roles within separate traditions of genealogical and spiritual descent from Ahmad Yasavi. For example, the name “Mansur Ata” figures in the Islamization narrative focused on Ishaq Bab, is assigned to the son of Arslan Baba and senior disciple of Ahmad Yasavi, and is the name of a mountain southwest of Sayram (probably indicating the existence of a shrine tradition there at one time).⁴² Similarly, the name “‘Abd al-Malik Khwaja” is assigned to a nephew of Ahmad Yasavi in the work of Ishaq Khwaja and in the Ürüng-quylaqi *nasab-nāma*, to a son of Ishaq Bab’s brother in another genealogical tradition, to the grandfather of Zangi Ata in hagiographical sources, and to separate shrines near Turkistan and Sayram. The name “Ibrahim Ata” is in various traditions assigned to the father, son, or younger brother of Ahmad Yasavi, as well as to the father of Isma‘il Ata, and is linked with shrines in Tashkent and Sayram. Even “Sadr Khwaja,” Yasavi’s brother in several traditions,

recalls the figure of “Sadr Ata” fitted into the standard Yasavi *silsila* as a disciple of Zangi Ata. While the names in each case are hardly unusual, allowing us to assume that several separate individuals were intended, the prominence of shrines or other sites known by the same names suggests that the onomastic repertoire of local hagiological lore was relatively limited, but was incorporated and adapted in different ways in the genealogical and narrative traditions developed by groups based in nearby locales.⁴³

We no doubt see the effects of such recycling in the two chief traditions we have reviewed. We may suspect that the close correspondence between the name assigned to the first *mutavalli* in the waqf document ascribed to Timur (Mir-^ʿAli Khwaja Shaykh) and the name assigned to Yasavi’s son-in-law by those claiming descent from Yasavi’s daughter (^ʿAli Khwaja) is not coincidental; rather, it reflects the purposeful appropriation of a single name associated somehow with the shrine of Ahmad Yasavi or with oral tradition about him. And after all, the recycling of names makes particular sense in the context of two or more competing groups constructing rival narratives justifying their claims. Corroborative material was inevitably available through hagiological traditions focused upon local shrines, which could provide specific names for integration into the family and genealogy of Ahmad Yasavi, and through the genealogical traditions previously formulated by other communities, which could provide both names and fuller narrative accounts. Depending on whether the community that circulated the earlier traditions was defunct or still intact—and thus a potential competitive threat in a given local situation—the names might be adopted without comment or assertively “reidentified” in ways meaningful within the new community’s prospective “charter,” while the stories as well might simply be incorporated into the later group’s history, altered to contest pointedly a rival group’s presentation and position, or adjusted to reflect whatever changed circumstances had occasioned the original group’s demise and the later group’s rise. In all cases the re-use of existing material would serve to facilitate the wide acceptance of the reformulated tradition put forward by a reconstituted community. Using names and episodes that were widely familiar and already accepted in a similar context would at once heighten the credibility of the new charter and, in the case of names and narratives linked to local shrines, ground the new charter in sacred geography.

As hinted at earlier, the genealogical material’s chief importance lies in the insights it may offer regarding the social and economic history of the middle Syr Darya basin. In particular, I believe that the *nasab-nāmas* often are virtually our only sources through which to understand the history and development of the *khoja* communities of southern Kazakhstan, and indeed all of Central Asia. Virtually all of the *nasab-nāmas* noted here are preserved in the hands of families regarded as *khojas*. These groups, who served important social and religious functions in pre-revolutionary Central Asian society,⁴⁴ were relatively poorly studied in Soviet times, whether among the Kazaks or among other Central Asian peoples,⁴⁵ and indeed the very meaning of the term *khoja*—which is rooted in an understanding of communal identity quite alien to modern notions of ethnicity and nationality—is not well understood. The term has been taken to imply, variously, descent from “Arabs,” descent from the Prophet or ^ʿAli, descent from the first three caliphs, or descent from Islamizing saints. But all of these views (less so the last) are in some way misleading.⁴⁶ What the *nasab-nāmas* make clear is that the present genealogical charters of these *khoja* communities typically

emphasize not simply descent from a caliph, but descent from an intermediate saintly figure, often identifiable with historically known Sufi shaykhs, from whom a particular *khoja* group will often take its specific name. This in turn suggests a parallel with the groups, mentioned earlier, defined in terms of their descent from Yasavi saints such as Sayyid Ata, Ismaʿil Ata, and others.⁴⁷ It suggests further some kind of historical interaction between these descent groups and Sufi communities (to which we will return shortly).

As noted, however, neither the historical development of these *khoja* communities nor their contemporary self-understanding or social role has received significant scholarly attention. Only the related phenomenon of the Turkmen “holy tribes” has been relatively well studied,⁴⁸ and Soviet ethnographers paid scant attention to the *khoja* phenomenon among the Kazaks.⁴⁹ After all, it was often considered dangerous in the Soviet anti-religious environment to acknowledge affiliation with such sacrally defined descent groups.⁵⁰ The prestige of the *khojas* was rooted in religious sentiments and in patterns of religious life the Soviet regime sought to eliminate, and reflected moreover a form of communal identity that was not easily assimilable into the state-sanctioned identities formulated after the national delimitation of Central Asia in the mid-1920s. While this hostile environment has changed, it lasted long enough—three generations—to have devastating effects on historical and genealogical memory, as well as on the coherent preservation and understanding of these communities’ documentary legacy.⁵¹ The new-found interest of the surviving self-conscious Kazak *khoja* groups in recovering (and reshaping) their identity, and even in promoting the shrines linked to their eponyms, has so far outstripped any serious scholarly attention to them by ethnographers or historians,⁵² and as we might expect, these groups are today faced not so much with recovering their identity as with reshaping it. In this sense, their task resembles that of earlier generations by whom the surviving *nasab-nāmas* were retrospectively recast, and it is difficult to suggest to what extent academic scholarship could or should contribute to that process.

In any event, without looking more deeply here at the *khoja* phenomenon, we may suggest that the genealogical materials noted offer potentially important insights into the appropriation of sacred ancestors by social groups originally held together by quite different communal charters. Such materials, as well as orally preserved traditions, have begun to be collected for groups such as the Sunaqs, the “Awliya²-i Qarakhan,” the “Divana” and “Khurasan Ata” *khojas*, the Qīlishtī *khojas*, groups tracing descent from “Baqsayīs Ata” or “Qawghan Ata,” and still others.⁵³ These materials may shed light not merely on a single family’s ancestry, however, but on a complex series of social processes, including ethnic, political, religious, and economic dimensions, that helped to produce the contemporary population of southern Kazakhstan, with implications for understanding similar processes throughout Central Asia.

As noted earlier, the names adopted by particular *khoja* communities; the parallels between these self-conscious descent groups and earlier communities defined by familial *nisbas* linked with Yasavi (and other) saints; the earlier attestation of saintly eponyms as Sufi shaykhs rather than as ancestors; the recycling of onomastic material evident in hagiographical, genealogical, and shrine-centered traditions; and the historical patterns evident from earlier sources involving formal communal affiliations between Sufi shaykhs and entire nomadic or sedentary communities⁵⁴ all suggest a

close connection between the *khoja* groups and the historical Sufi communities of Central Asia.

Even recognition, let alone understanding, of the likely historical connections between the *khoja* communities and Sufi groups has been hampered not only by the lack of serious study of the *khoja* phenomenon, but by the generally low level of scholarship on religious life and history in Central Asia. On the one hand, the historical study of Sufi communities and of shrine traditions in Central Asia, which appear to have played decisive roles in the emergence of *khoja* groups and other religiously defined sub-communities, is in its infancy, and even specialists who have been aware of the *khojas* and their social prominence and have taken note of the problems associated with their origins have lacked any developed historical framework in which to situate the *khojas* in social, religious, or even onomastic terms. On the other hand, Soviet anti-religious policies not only rendered *khoja* identity unfashionable; it had stultifying effects on the scholarly study of religiously defined communities and their social functions. With few exceptions, Soviet treatments of such groups were shaped by predictable categories of class and ideology (where the *khojas* stood in the aristocratic hierarchy might be debated, but their association with religious obscurantism and exploitation was a given), and there was virtually no deeper analysis of such communities' origins, history, self-conception, or social functions, and no comparative study informed by broader conceptual frameworks such as were developed in Western social anthropology for understanding collectively mediated notions of holiness and their communal embodiments.⁵⁵

Once again, to explore the connections in question it will be essential not only to go beyond previous, Soviet-shaped analytical models, but also to combine insights drawn from several approaches and sources. Anthropological models may suggest certain relationships between saintly lineages and Sufi organizations, but these must also be informed by historical patterns evident in the relationship between natural descent and Sufi *silsila*-based succession, without rigid expectations of unilinear developments. The Yasavi Sufi tradition offers clear examples of processes whereby the natural descendants of a shaykh might maintain, or claim to maintain, his rightful spiritual transmission, and of situations in which the spiritual heirs of a shaykh, belonging to a community defined in terms of adherence to a Sufi tradition, come to be understood as a group bound by natural descent and kinship.

We know, for instance, of several *khoja* communities of southern Kazakhstan that trace their descent to "Baqsayīs," who is placed, in local familial tradition, within a genealogical framework familiar to us from the Ürüŋ-quylaŋ *nasab-nāma* and from the waqfiyya ascribed to Timur: Baqsayīs is cast as the grandson of "Khoja Momīn (i.e., Muʿmin) Ata," who is yet another son of "Azret (i.e., *hazrat*) Sadir," the brother of Ahmad Yasavi (and, moreover, just as Ürüŋ-quylaŋ tradition portrays Yasavi "adopting" Safi al-Din as his son, thus making his descendants descendants of Yasavi, the Baqsayīs tradition does the same with Khoja Momīn Ata).⁵⁶ Yet we also know, from hagiographical sources, of a Sufi shaykh of the Yasavi tradition, active in what is now southern Kazakhstan during the 16th century, called "Bakhshayish Shaykh."⁵⁷ It seems likely that this figure, who also seems to have been adopted into popular narratives about the Islamization of the Golden Horde first attested in the 18th century, served as the inspiration for the ancestral figure of Baqsayīs. If this is correct, it is clear that we have an individual linked to Ahmad Yasavi through a *silsila* connection trans-

formed into his natural descendant. From this point, however, we can only conjecture whether the Baqsay's *khojas* should be understood as his actual descendants, as the descendants of a Sufi community that formed around him, or as descendants of an existing nomadic or sedentary group that affiliated on a communal basis with the "historical" Bakhshayish Shaykh (examples of each kind of development, and still others, may be clearly identified or reasonably surmised in the history of the Yasavi tradition).

As noted, the materials that may offer clearer insights into these developments—whether oral tradition or genealogical and hagiographical texts—have just now begun to be brought to light. A proper appreciation of these materials, I believe, will add substantially to the sources at our disposal for understanding the social history of Central Asia during the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the rule of the local khanates gave way to the Russian conquest and then to the dramatic transformations accompanying the establishment of the Soviet state. Our knowledge of that period—whether sought in its own right or as a "baseline" for evaluating the effects of Soviet rule—remains quite poor but must be improved if we are to understand and interpret what is now being rediscovered, and more often re-imagined, as the history of Central Asia's emerging nations.

The *khoja* phenomenon offers a convenient vantage point from which to approach this problem, above all because it invites us to suspend the analytical categories, whether of Soviet or Sovietological provenance, that have hampered a more balanced and integral understanding of Central Asian social history. The *khoja* communities obviously cut across the territorial borders that have become, during the last decade, international boundary lines between sovereign states. But they also cut across the conceptual borders typically recognized in most contemporary discussions of Central Asia's present and future, whether borders of language and "ethnicity" that somewhat artificially divided Central Asian peoples into Soviet nations, borders between rural and urban populations, between traditionally nomadic and sedentary groups, and between supposedly "less Muslim" and "more Muslim" peoples, or borders between pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet projections of communal history and their political implications.

In any event, a fuller study of the contemporary religiously defined communities that are now reconstructing their identities and roles must be accompanied by, and in turn inform, a fuller historical study of the Sufi traditions of Central Asia. Genealogical materials of the sort discussed here, as well as the broader setting of communal and familial rivalries they illuminate, will offer key insights into the complex origins and historical development of these social groups.

NOTES

¹See my preliminary remarks on earlier approaches to the legacy of Ahmad Yasavi in "The *Mashā'ikh-i Turk* and the *Khojagān*: Rethinking the Links Between the Yasavi and Naqshbandi Sufi Traditions," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1996): 180–207, and my forthcoming "The Yasavi Order and Persian Hagiography in 17th-Century Central Asia: Ālim Shaykh of Āliyābād and his *Lamahāt min nafahāt al-quds*," *Persianate Sufism in the Safavid and Mughal Period* (London); a more complete study of the Yasavi tradition is in preparation.

²See the survey of B. E. Kumekov, B. N. Nastich, and V. K. Shukhovtsov, "Pis'mennye dokumenty iz iuzhnogo Kazakhstana," *Vestnik AN KazSSR*, no. 8 (1977): 70–73, and the study of several documents directly linked to the shrine by V. K. Shukhovtsov, "Pis'mennye dokumenty iz goroda Turkestana," *Kazakhstan v*

èpokhu feodalizma (Problemy ètnopoliticheskoi istorii) (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1981), 164–91. Most of these documents were taken from the shrine to Alma-Ata in 1978, but evidently, in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise, they have been (or are to be) returned to the shrine.

³The document enjoins that the funds derived from the properties made waqf in support of the shrine should provide not only for the management of the properties themselves, but for a cup bearer and sweeper, for *hāfīzes* and Qur'an-reciters, and, if sufficient, for repair of the building. Special attention is given to the requirement to provide, each Monday and Friday, sufficient wheat, meat, and salt (as well as firewood) for the preparation of the *hālīm*, a meal described in the document as intended for "the *hāfīzes*, the *dhikr*-reciters, the *faqīrs*, travelers, the poor, and the orphans of that locality," and better known from 20th-century descriptions of Yasavi's shrine and its activities as a weekly charitable meal.

⁴A summary of the document's contents was published in *Protokoly zasedanii i soobshcheniia chlenov Turkestanskago kruzhka liubitelei arkheologii* (Tashkent) (hereafter *PTKLA*), vol. 2 (1897), in the report on the session of 29 August 1897, 1–4; a description of the original document, and a brief history of its acquisition, were published in *PTKLA*, vol. 2 (1897), in the report on the session of 16 October 1897, 9–11; the Persian text of the document was published in A. A. Divaev's "Podlinnyi tekst zhalovannoi gramoty, dannoi Timurom Turkestanskoi mecheti Khazriata Iassavi," *PTKLA*, vol. 3 (1897–98), 75–80; and a full Russian translation, prepared by Divaev, appeared in *Turkestanskii vedomosti*, no. 39 and 41 (1901), and was reprinted in A. I. Dobrosmyslov, *Goroda Syr-Dar'inskoi oblasti. Kazalinsk, Perovsk, Turkestan, Aulie-ata i Chimkent* (Tashkent: Tipo-litografiia O. A. Portseva, 1912), 141–47.

⁵The comments of M. E. Masson, *Mavzolei Khodzha Akhmeda Iasevi* (Tashkent: Syr-Dar'inskoe otделение Obshchestva izucheniia Kazakstana, 1930) are discussed later; cf. Nagim-Bek Nurmukhammedov, *Mavzolei Khodzhi Akhmeda Iasevi* (Alma-Ata: Öner, 1980), 8, 18, 29, n. 3.

⁶Cf. A. E. Erenov, *Ocherki po istorii feodal'nykh zemel'nykh otnoshenii u kazakhov* (Alma-Ata: Izd-vo AN KazSSR, 1960), 48–51; K. A. Pishchulina, "Prisyrdar'inskie goroda i ikh znachenie v istorii kazakhskikh khanstv v XV–XVII vekakh," *Kazakhstan v XV–XVIII vekakh (Voprosy sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii)* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1969), 5–49, 9; R. Z. Burnasheva, "K voprosu ob ekonomicheskom položenii pozdnesrednevekovogo goroda Turkestana i oblasti (XV–XIX vv.)," in *Srednevekovaiia gorodskaiia kul'tura Kazakhstana i Srednei Azii* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1983), 55, citing Pishchulina.

⁷See his "K istorii orosheniia Turkestana" (1914), reprinted in his collected *Sochineniia*, III (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 225.

⁸A. A. Semenov, "Mechet' Khodzhi Akhmeda Eseviiskogo v g. Turkestane. Rezul'taty osmotra v noiabre 1922 g.," *Izvestiia Sredazhmestarisia*, vol. 1 (Tashkent, 1926), 129–30, n. 3.

⁹V. A. Gordlevskii, "Choğa Ahmed Jasevi" (in German), in *Festschrift Georg Jacob*, ed. Theodor Menzel (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1932), 60 (in Russian, with some additional material, in V. A. Gordlevskii, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 3 [Moscow, 1962], 363).

¹⁰O. D. Chekhovich, "Sobranie vostochnykh aktov Akademii nauk Uzbekistana," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 26 (1948), 309. Chekhovich writes that the document's authenticity had evidently never been called into question during its study at the turn of the century, and was evidently unaware of Semenov's doubts and Gordlevskii's categorical rejection.

¹¹Divaev, ed., "Podlinnyi tekst," 77; Dobrosmyslov, *Goroda*, 143.

¹²These groups bear the generic designation "*khoja*" (as transcribed in Russian scholarship; it appears as "*khojā*" in modern Uzbek and as "*qoja*" in modern Kazak), derived from the Persian honorific "*khwāja*" that was applied historically to many Central Asian Sufi shaykhs. The contemporary *khoja* groups are discussed toward the end of this paper.

¹³Safi ad-Din Orīn Qoylaqī (*sic*), "*Nasab-nāma*," ed. Äshirbek Qürbanūli Muminov and Zikiriya Zamankhanūli Jandarbekov (Turkestan: Mūra, 1992). The manuscript, reproduced in transcription and facsimile, was discovered in 1988. See also the discussions of the *nasab-nāma* in Äshurbek Mominov, "Yässäviyā: ildiz vä mänbälär," *Fän vä turmush*, no. 9–10 (1993), 18–19, 21. For an expanded and better-annotated version of this article in Russian, see A. K. Muminov, "O proiskhozhdenii bratstva iasaviia," *Islam i problemy mezhtsivilizatsionnykh vzaimodeistvii* (Moscow: Obshchestvo "Nur," 1994), 219–31; "Novye napravleniia v izucheniia istorii bratstva iasaviia," *Obshchestvennye nauki v Uzbekistane*, no. 11–12 (1993), 34–38; Ä. Q. Mominov and Z. Z. Jandarbekov, "Yässäviyā tä'limati vujudgä kelgän muhit haqidä yängi muhim mänbä," *Shärgshunaslik* (Tashkent), vol. 5 (1994), 82–88; Z. Jandarbekov's "Qoja Akhmet Yasau," *Jibek jolī*, no. 1–2 (1993), 17–19; and two articles of Zikiriya Jandarbek published in the collective volume *Yäsau Taghlimi* (Turkistan: "Mūra" baspajerlik shaghin käsiporni/Qoja Akhmet Yäsau

atindaghi Khaliqaraliq Kazak-Türk Universiteti, 1996): “Ongtüstik Kazakstandaghi VIII–XII ghasirlardaghi islam tarikhi jayli bir jazba derek” (pp. 39–44) and “‘Nasab-nama’ nusqalarining jazilghan uaqiti men jeri, redaksiyalari” (pp. 60–75). The same *nasab-nama*, and others, are more briefly discussed in Ashirbek K. Muminov, “Veneration of Holy Sites of the Mid-Sirdar’ya Valley: Continuity and Transformation,” *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Michael Kemper, Anke von Kügelgen, and Dmitriy Yermakov (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1996; Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, vol. 200), 355–67; and now, with a preliminary discussion of the *khoja* phenomenon, in Muminov’s “Die Qoʻzas (sic): Arabische Genealogien in Kasachstan,” *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, vol. 2: *Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Relations*, ed. Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998; Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, vol. 216), 193–209.

¹⁴An “edition” of the Ürüŋ-quylaqi genealogy, with a Turkish translation, was recently published in Turkey: Mevlânâ Safiyyü’d-Dîn, *Neseb-nâme Tercümesi*, ed. Kemal Eraslan (Istanbul: Yesevi Yayıncılık, 1996). Eraslan’s text was based on four versions, including the 1992 publication by Muminov and Jandarbekov, as well as one copy obtained by Eraslan in Turkistan in 1993. Unfortunately, Eraslan has also misconstrued the text, assuming it to be a product of the 12th century (he was also unaware of the earlier inclusion of much of the text he publishes in the treatise of Ishaq Khoja ibn Ismaʿil Ata, noted later). Excerpts from two additional copies of the *nasab-nama* were published, in Uzbek transcription, in *Ähmäd Yässäviy äjdadlari shäjäräsi/Ähmäd Yässäviy vä Ämir Temur*, ed. Räsulmühämmäd haji Äbdushukurov Äshurbay oghli (Tashkent: Häzinä, 1996).

¹⁵The most complete descriptions are unfortunately not altogether clear on which manuscripts reflect which versions of these genealogies. Muminov discussed the provenance of nine copies of the *nasab-nama* ascribed to Safi ad-Din Ürüŋ-quylaqi in his “Yässäviyâ” (p. 19, n. 1) and “O proiskhozhdenii” (p. 219). One copy mentioned in these discussions was published by M. Mirkhaldarov (*Khojâ Ähmäd Yässäviy, Shäjäräi säadät* [Chimkent, 1992]), but this text has not been available to me. (It was used, however, by Eraslan in *Neseb-nâme Tercümesi*.) In the joint article by Muminov and Jandarbekov (“Yässäviyâ täʿlimati,” 83–85), twelve manuscripts are briefly described. Seven are classified as genealogies of the “Aq-qorghān *khojas*” (the authors assume that “Orung-Qoylaq,” as they transcribe it, is a site identifiable with the locale known today as “Aq-qorghān”; it is not clear whether this is based upon some explicit source or tradition supporting such an identification, or upon the presence in the vicinity of Aq-qorghān of families claiming descent from Safi ad-Din Ürüŋ-quylaqi), but of these, numbers 5, 6, and 7 do not appear to correspond with texts mentioned in Muminov’s articles cited earlier; two are called genealogies of the “Devanâ *khojas*” and are not mentioned in the earlier article; two (no. 10 and 11) described as genealogies of the “Qarâkhan *khojas*” and one (no. 12) classified as an account of the “Khurasan *khojas*” correspond to three texts mentioned in the earlier article; and two copies mentioned in the earlier article do not appear to correspond to copies mentioned in the joint article. Another classification scheme appears (on the basis of ten copies) in Jandarbek, “‘Nasab-nama’ nusqalarining jazilghan uaqiti men jeri,” while yet another is implied in Muminov, “Die Qoʻzas,” in a classification of *khoja* groups only partially based on the textual materials. In personal communication during the spring of 1995, the authors mentioned that the total number of such texts had reached twenty-two. In the fall of 1995, Muminov and Jandarbekov were kind enough to supply me with copies of eleven separate texts, of which five represent the Ürüŋ-quylaqi tradition, with the rest falling into distinct groups reflecting quite separate lineages. (By the fall of 1996, Muminov had mentioned in a letter that a total of twenty-nine such *nasab-namas* had been collected, but it is again not clear how many different lineages are represented.)

¹⁶This work is preserved in at least two redactions reflected in several (virtually all uncatalogued) manuscript copies. Here I cite two copies from the Institute of Manuscripts in Tashkent: MS 252, f. 87a; MS 3004, ff. 194a–b (this institute was recently closed and its manuscript collection transferred to the Institute of Oriental Studies). A more complete study of this work is in preparation.

¹⁷A preliminary study of these legends appeared in my “Yasavian Legends on the Islamization of Turkistan,” in *Aspects of Altaic Civilization III*, Proceedings of the Thirtieth Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, 19–25 June 1987 (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1990), 1–19. I am currently preparing a more complete examination of the many more variants identified to date.

¹⁸The text was discovered and published by Mükhamedrakhim Jarmükhamedüli in a small brochure (“Nasab-nama”/“Rodoslovnaia Khodzhi Akhmeta Iasavi” [Almaty: Daur, 1995 (?)]) that includes

photographs of Yasavi's shrine together with both sides of the document. The document is also reproduced, at a lesser reduction, in a separate insert accompanying the brochure, and the publication includes also a Cyrillic Kazak transcription plus Jarmūkamedülī's brief introduction in Kazak, Russian, Turkish, and English. The publication is marred by misreadings of the text and syntactic misinterpretations, and nowhere does Jarmūkamedülī note that the genealogy, though mentioning Ahmad Yasavi, is actually focused on descendants of Isma'īl Ata. Still, the facsimile's publication provides a helpful service (the text was evidently used independently by Eraslan, *Neseb-nâme Tercümesi*). The discovery of the text, described as a genealogy of Yasavi, was noted in a brief article by O. Petrushel', "Raskryta taina drevnei rukopisi," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 24 May 1991, 3. Jarmūkamedülī himself had earlier referred to the text, with a brief description of its contents, in his introduction to a publication of the *Divān-i hikmat* in Kazak translation (Qoja Akhmet Isauī, *Diuani khikmet (Aqil kitabī)* [Almatī: Mūrattas, 1993], 7–9). He also discussed it in Muhammedrahīm Carmuhammed-ūlī, "Hoca Ahmed Yesevī'nin hayatı hakkında yeni deliller ve o'nun bilinmeyen 'Risale' adlı eserinin ilmî değeri," *Milletlerarası Ahmed Yesevī Sempozyumu Bildirileri* 26–27 Eylül 1991, trans. Talat Tekin (Ankara: Feryal Matbaası, 1992), 13–20.

¹⁹Muhammad Šālih Khwāja, *Tārīkh-i jadidah-i Tāshkand*, MS Tashkent, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan (hereafter IVANUz), no. 7791, ff. 937a–938a. The manuscript is described in A. A. Semenov et al., ed., *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR* (hereafter *SVR*), vol. VI, 34–36, no. 4183. On the work, see Ch. A. Stori, *Persidskaia literatura; bibliograficheskii obzor*, trans. Iu. È. Bregel' (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), vol. II, 1199–1200. The account mentions Yasavi's brother "Sadr Khwaja Ata," but says nothing more about him.

²⁰In the *Tārīkh-i amaniyya*, a 19th-century Turkic history of East Turkistan by Mullā Mūsā ibn 'Isā Khwāja Sayrāmī, the author gives his genealogy traced back through Arslān Baba (who is implicitly portrayed as sharing a grandfather with Ahmad Yasavi), and then gives the text of a document purportedly given by the Uzbek 'Ubaydullah Khan to one of Mulla Musa's ancestors in 945/1538, according him the post of *shaykh al-islām* for Sayram (this text at least gives an impression of greater authenticity than that ascribed to Timur, with specific dates that appear credible, and formulas expected in a khan's *yarliq*, for example). See the text published by N. N. Pantusov, *Tārīkh-i èmènie, Istoriia vladetelei Kashgarii: Sochinenie Mully Musy, ben Mulla Aisa, Sairamtsa* (Kazan, 1905), 288–91; the discussion in Bartol'd's review of Pantusov's publication (*Sochineniia*, vol. VIII, 213); and the Russian translation of the entire passage in *Materialy po istorii kazakhskikh khansiv XV–XVIII vekov* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1969), 488–90.

²¹Khwāja 'Abd ar-Rahīm Hīšārī, *Tuḥfat al-ansāb-i 'alavī*, MS IVANUz no. 1459 (*SVR*, vol. III, 340–41, no. 2638), f. 273a.

²²The unique copy of the manuscript containing the *Javāhir al-abrār* has now been published by Cihan Okuyucu: Hazini, *Cevāhirul-ibrār min emvāc-ī bihār (Yesevī Menākibnamesi)* (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi, 1995), 41, 45, on Yasavi's family (see my discussion of this publication in "The Yasavi Order and Persian Hagiography," n. 3); cf. Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Türk edebiyatında ilk mutasavvıflar* (5th Latin script printing) (Ankara: Arisan Matbaacılık, 1984), 29–31. The name supplied in this work for Yasavi's mother, incidentally, is found in no other source. Other traditions assign her quite different names and different origins or ignore her altogether.

²³'Alīm Shaykh 'Alīyābādī, *Lamaḥāt min nafaḥāt al-quds*, MS Leningrad, St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (hereafter SPFIVRAN), C1602, ff. 43b–44a; see the manuscript description in N. D. Miklukho-Maklai, *Opisanie tadjikskikh i persidskikh rukopisei Instituta narodov Azii*, vyp. 2, *Biograficheskie sochineniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoi Literatury, 1961), 133–35, no. 187.

²⁴*Cevāhir*, ed. Okuyan, 61; Köprülü, *İlk mutasavvıflar*, 40.

²⁵*Tuḥfat al-ansāb-i 'alavī*, MS IVANUz 1459, f. 277a.

²⁶Gordlevsky, "Choğa Ahmed Jasevī," 63; Russian trans., 365.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 60–61/363–64.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 63–64/365–66. According to Gordlevskii, the *azler* (whose permanent dwelling place was in the village of "Kumbulak") conducted the *zikr*; the *naqib* (who lived in "Karsakly") was the "chief quarter-master"; and the *shaykh al-islām* (who resided in "Berçin") "embodied the *sharī'a*" and ensured strict observance of religious etiquette at the shrine (the 80-year-old *naqib* had died in 1928, Gordlevskii notes, and was succeeded by his son). During the *zikr* that followed the Friday prayers, the *azler* would remain in the *zikr-khana*, while the *shaykh al-islām* would take his place in the larger assembly hall, with the *naqib* at his right side. During Qur'anic recitations, the *shaykh al-islām* took charge, still in the assembly hall, with the *azler* sitting below him and the *naqib* near the huge cauldron provided for the shrine by Timur.

During the congregational *khilvets*, the *azler* sat to the right of the assembly hall, with the *shaykh al-islām* to his right and the *naqib* to his left, while the left side of the hall was occupied by the *beks* and judges, the civil authorities of Turkistan.

²⁹Gordlevsky, "Choğa Ahmed Jasevi," 60; Russian trans., 363.

³⁰Masson, *Mavzolei*, 9.

³¹Dobrosmyslov, *Goroda*, 147–50.

³²Dobrosmyslov (*Goroda*, 148) publishes a photograph of a document purportedly from the early 19th century in which Umar Khan of Qoqand appointed "Oskar-Khodzhe Abd-ar-Rakhimov" as *mutavallī*.

³³Predictably, such instances of competition among claimed descendants of Yasavi's family were highlighted in Soviet anti-religious literature focused on Yasavi's shrine; see the discussion in Iu. G. Petrash, *Ten' srednevekov'ia* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1981), 129–30, 138–41. Petrash cites court documents from 1901 to 1903 reflecting disputes between the caretakers of the shrine and putative descendants of Ahmad Yasavi. Unfortunately, he offers no further details on the contents of the documents or the specific identity of the claimants.

³⁴Dobrosmyslov nevertheless prints photographs of the *shaykh al-islām*, "Izatulla-Khodzha Nasrulla-Khodzhinov," and the *shaykh-naqib*, "Dzhunaidilla-Khodzha Rakhmatulla-Khodzhinov" (*Goroda*, 149). The former is evidently the grandson of the man confirmed as *shaykh al-islām* immediately after the Russian capture of Turkistan in 1864, whom Dobrosmyslov identifies (p. 122) as "Nasrulla-Khodzha-Iskhakov."

³⁵Documents reflecting primarily the era of Qoqandian rule, ranging in date from 1258/1842 to 1300/1883, continue to refer to the *mutavallī*'s role even after the three "new" posts cited by Masson begin to be mentioned, suggesting that the post of *mutavallī* survived. Alternatively, we may understand from this that the functions of the *mutavallī* were simply performed, perhaps jointly, by the holders of the new posts, and that what was abolished was not the post but one descent group's monopoly on the function: see Shukhovtsov, "Pis'mennye dokumenty"; Shukhovtsov, however, makes no mention of any administrative change, and does not explore the issue of the ancestry claimed by the individuals identified as holding the relevant posts.

³⁶Dobrosmyslov, *Goroda*, 121–23.

³⁷Mir-Salikh Bekchurin, "Opisanie mecheti Azreta, nakhodiashcheisia v Turkestane," *Voennyi sbornik*, vol. 9/8 (August 1866), 209–19.

³⁸Bekchurin ("Opisanie," 214–15) mentions by name the holders of the posts of *shaykh al-islām*, *azizlar*, *naqib*, *khaqib*, two *chiraqchis*, the *farrāsh*, and the *muezzin* or *azanchi*.

³⁹The original Polish account by Adolf Januszkiewicz appeared in 1875. I have used the Russian translation: A. Ianushkevich, *Dnevnik i pis'ma iz puteshestviia po kazakhskim stepiam*, trans. F. Steklova (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1966), 191–92.

⁴⁰The frequent and explicit insistence, in the document ascribed to Timur, both on the exclusive rights to the shrine's management rightfully pertaining to descendants of Mir 'Ali Khwaja Shaykh, the son of Yasavi's brother, and on the importance of the post of *mutavallī* (on the latter, see Divaev, "Podlinnyi tekst," 80; Dobrosmyslov, *Goroda*, 147) suggests that the text was drawn up, or at least adjusted, in response to the elimination of the post and the removal of Sadr Shaykh's descendants from the shrine's administration.

⁴¹PTKLA, vol. 2 (1897), session of 16 October 1897, 10. Curiously, among the native officials Smirnov mentions "the *mutavallī*, *naib*, *azizliar*, and others." A similar charge became part of the Soviet anti-religious literature attacking the "clergy" at Yasavi's shrine for enriching itself while neglecting the "monument"; see Petrash, *Ten'*, 137–39.

⁴²On shrine traditions linked with Sayram, see my "Sacred History for a Central Asian Town: Saints, Shrines, and Legends of Origin in Histories of Sayram, 18th–19th Centuries," in *Mythes historiques du monde musulman* (special issue of *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*), ed. Denise Aigle (Paris, forthcoming).

⁴³This hypothesis, moreover, would explain the "reductionist" tendency in much of the local genealogical lore preserved today in southern Kazakhstan, in which what were most likely separate traditions focusing on distinct holy ancestors of various origins have increasingly been overshadowed by the most prominent saint of the region, leaving the vast majority of descent groups today linked in some way with the figure of Ahmad Yasavi.

⁴⁴In Central Asia, the *khoja* communities served as mediators between nomadic tribes, between nomads and settled communities, and between both nomads and villagers and centralizing rulers, providing an important means of arbitrating disputes and forestalling or ameliorating social conflict. These roles were

facilitated not only by their religious prestige, but also by their status as social groups outside traditional tribal structures. In addition, the *khojas* often controlled rich properties linked with their ancestral shrines (and contested such control with rival descent groups), and they served their communities as officiants at major ritual celebrations, such as circumcisions, marriages, and funerals.

⁴⁵For an overview of ethnographic treatments of *khoja* groups in Central Asia, with special attention to groups among the Kazaks (including communities found within tribal groups—e.g., within the Kereyt tribe), Uzbeks (among the Ming, Yüz, and Nayman tribes), Qaraqalpaqs, Türkmens, and Tajiks, see R. Ia. Rassudova, “Termin khodzha v toponimike Srednei Azii,” *Onomastika Srednei Azii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 115–28. See also idem, “Semeinye gruppy: Odná iz form organizatsii truda v oroshaemykh raionakh Srednei Azii (XIX-pervaia polovina XX v.),” *Strany i narody Vostoka*, 25 (1987), 68–88. *Khoja* groups among the Uzbeks and Tajiks are discussed in B. Kh. Karmysheva, *Ocherki étnograficheskoi istorii iuzhnykh raionov Tadzhikistana i Uzbekistana (Po étnograficheskim dannym)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), esp. 148–53.

⁴⁶The understanding of “*khojas*” as descendants of the first four caliphs, and the expectation that “real” *khojas* could be distinguished from fraudulent claimants to that title by the preservation of written genealogies in the hands of the former, appear frequently in 19th-century Russian accounts of Central Asia. Occasionally, the term “*khoja*” is treated as a synonym of “*sayyid*,” while in other cases the term “*sayyid*” is restricted to descendants of the Prophet through ʿAli, and “*khoja*” is used for descendants of the other three caliphs. Claims of such descent, in any case, tended to dissolve into a general notion of the “Arab” origin of *khoja* groups (an understanding attested already in the 18th century). In her review of explanations of the term “*khoja*,” Rassudova concludes that the most common understanding of the term involves a claim of Arab origin (“Termin khodzha,” 115, 120). In this article and elsewhere (see Rassudova’s “Semeinye gruppy” and her “K istorii odezhdnykh sredneaziatskogo dukhovenstva,” *Pamiatniki traditsionno-bytovoi kul'tury narodov Srednei Azii, Kazakhstana i Kavkaza* [Leningrad: Nauka, 1989; *Sbornik Muzeia antropologii i étnografii*, XLIII], 170–79), Rassudova rightly calls for caution in evaluating the assumption of Arab origin (in part because of the wide occurrence of *khoja* groups among diverse peoples, nomadic and sedentary, Turkic and Iranian, tribal and non-tribal), and suggests a much more complex history of these groups’ formation than implied in the notion of Arab origin. However, she unfortunately clouds the issue by proposing “an earlier period for the ethnosocial history” of *khoja* origins on the basis of supposed similarities between the distinctive head gear and outer clothing she regards as typical of the *khojas* and corresponding garb among the Scythians. The standard assumptions, in any case, not only fail to account for the use of the term “*khoja*” itself (since it is never explained why this term should denote some genealogical link with the caliphs or “Arabs,” or even Islamizers), but most likely miss the real source of legitimizing ancestral sanctity central to *khoja* identity. The *khojas* of Central Asia are in all likelihood called *khojas* because of claimed descent from specific saints bearing the appellation “*khoja*” (just as the putative descendants of the Naqshbandi shaykh called “Makhдум-i Aʿzam” came to be known also as “*makhđum-zādas*” or simply “*makhđūms*”). The further genealogical connections of those saints, with caliphs or Islamizers, no doubt offered a supplemental source of charisma, but that source came to dominate contemporary self-conceptions of *khoja* status as a result both of the proliferation of communities attached to specific shrine traditions and holy lineages, and of the decline in communal knowledge about the intermediate generations in their lineages, a process accelerated by the pressures of the Soviet era.

⁴⁷The parallel is strengthened in the case of the groups defined in terms of descent from Sayyid Ata, who claimed hereditary rights to specific administrative posts in Central Asia from the 16th to 18th centuries: see my “The Descendants of Sayyid Ata and the Rank of *Naqib* in Central Asia,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1995): 612–34.

⁴⁸See especially S. M. Demidov, *Turkmenskie ovliady* (Ashkhabad: Ylym, 1976), as well as V. N. Basilov, “O proiskhozhdenii Turkmen-Ata (prostonarodnye formy sredneaziatskogo sufizma),” in *Domusul'manske verovaniia i obiady v Srednei Azii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 138–68 (in which the origins of one of the “holy tribes” is connected with a “degenerated” form of Sufism), and Basilov’s “Honour Groups in Traditional Turkmenian Society,” *Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus*, ed. Akbar S. Ahmed and David M. Hart (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 220–43.

⁴⁹The *khojas* among the Kazaks were mentioned already by P. S. Pallas, *Puteshestvie po raznym provintsiiam Rossiiskoi imperii*, chap. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1773), 579, who calls them “honored persons of ancient lineage.” See also, from the same period, the work of I. G. Georgi, *Opisanie vsekh v Rossiiskom gosudarstve obitaiuschchikh narodov*, chap. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1776), 121, where it is noted that the *khojas* were not necessarily regarded among the Kazaks as descendants of the Prophet. Kazak customary law

codified under Russian rule in 1824 provided that the fine for murdering a *khoja* was equal to the fine for seven ordinary persons: see Valentin A. Riasanovsky, *Customary Law of the Nomadic Tribes of Siberia* (Tientsin, 1938; repr. Bloomington: Indiana University, Uralic and Altaic Series, vol. 48, 1965), 16. Some *khoja* groups were at least briefly described, in Russian studies from the late 19th century, as distinct communities within Kazak society. In Soviet-era scholarship, however, the *khojas* among the Kazaks were treated almost exclusively from the perspective of historical ethnography, as communities that were formerly prominent, but not as ongoing, living social groups. In V. V. Vostrov and M. S. Mukanov, *Rodoplemennoi sostav i rasselenie kazakhov (konets XIX–nachalo XX v.)* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1968), one finds mention of the “spiritual class” called “*kozha*” (*sic*), described as comprising “descendants of Muslim conquistadors” (!), but only on the basis of 19th-century material. More detailed treatments, with further references to 19th-century accounts of the *khojas* (who are typically grouped together with *mullas* as the “religious aristocracy” among the pre-revolutionary Kazaks), are found in M. Bizhanov, “Sotsial’nye kategorii kazakhskogo obshchestva XVIII veka v trudakh russkikh uchenykh,” *Kazakhstan v XV–XVIII vekakh (Voprosy sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1969), 160–70, and S. Z. Zimanov, *Obshchestvennyi stroi kazakhov pervoi poloviny XIX veka* (Alma-Ata: Izd-vo AN KazSSR, 1958), 221–23. Bizhanov stresses the endogamy of the Kazak *khojas*, who he affirms would neither give their daughters to, or marry the daughters of, ordinary Kazaks, and insists that their primary social functions lay “in regulating religious rituals and in the propaganda of Islam.” These functions included not only advising the *sultans* and *biys* and “popularizing” their decisions, he claims, but also officiating at common rituals such as circumcision, marriage, burials, and memorial feasts, which were conducted only with the participation of the *khojas*. Zimanov stresses the *khojas*’ position outside Kazak clan and tribal structure as evidence that they “did not enter into Kazak society” and avoided interaction with neighboring nomads or territorial units. All such evaluations, of course, were shaped by the analytical categories of Soviet scholarship and must be viewed with skepticism.

⁵⁰The stigma attached to *khoja* identity is evident in a brief article by an Uzbek scholar on the origin of the term: Yä. Ghulamov, “‘Khoja’ sozi qäyerdän kelib chiqqän?” *Fän vä turmush*, 1 (1970), 29. Explaining that the term *khoja* referred to a member of the slave-holding and land-owning class, and that the *khojas* typically flaunted their privileges among the common people, the author concludes by noting that “with the victory of the Great October Revolution, the country’s internal and external policy no longer had any need of the *khojas*–schmojas,” and that therefore “the *khojas* have almost completely lost their social and economic position,” becoming “thoroughly assimilated into the mass of common people.”

⁵¹The confiscation of *khojas*’ genealogical documents is briefly discussed, in the context of the persistence of *khoja* identity through the Soviet era, in John Schoeberlein-Engel, “The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity,” *Central Asia Monitor*, 2 (1996): 17–18.

⁵²The recent works of Muminov and Jandarbekov stand at the forefront of the process whereby the *khoja* communities, and their genealogical traditions, may be re-evaluated. Their approach, as suggested, needs to be balanced by appreciating the *nasab-nāmas* as rich sources on the 19th century rather than on the 9th, but they and a few other Kazak scholars have taken the lead in uncovering the material vital to understanding the complex of religious and social processes represented in the *khoja* traditions. See also the earlier work of R. M. Mustafina, *Predstavleniia kul’ty, obriady u kazakhov (V kontekste bytovogo islama v Iuzhnom Kazakhstane v konste XIX–XX vv.)* (Alma-Ata: Kazak universiteti, 1992), 16, 31–33, 52–53, 158–59. Though still shaped in some respects by academic propensities of the Soviet era, Mustafina’s study took the first steps toward re-evaluating the *khojas*’ historical and social roles. In addition, the contemporary *khojas* and their religious and social roles occupy an important place in the new anthropological study of Bruce G. Privratsky, “Turkistan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory” (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, August 1998), which marks the first serious work on Islam among the Kazaks unhampered by Soviet-era conceptual frameworks and analytical strategies. Privratsky’s material highlights the contemporary role of the *khojas* as “proxies,” in effect, for Kazak religious performance.

⁵³Local tradition recorded by Mustafina (*Predstavleniia*, 52–53) divides the *khojas* into ten groups. Another classification scheme, involving nine main groups and numerous subgroups, is offered in Muminov, “Die Qożas,” 194–201. The classifications are no doubt complicated by the ongoing process of revising the identifications of individual saintly ancestors, a process facilitated in turn by the reductionist tendencies of popular hagiography (e.g., as Ahmad Yasavi eclipses all other saints—a development helped along not only by the government of Kazakhstan, but by that of Turkey as well—we find originally independent saints incorporated into a genealogical framework in which Yasavi is the central figure). As the *khoja*

groups in Kazakhstan and elsewhere are studied, of course, it will be important to look beyond, as far as possible, the national and ethnic boundaries imposed upon Central Asia by 20th-century forces. Nineteenth-century accounts show the presence of large *khoja* groups, closely related to those now resurfacing in southern Kazakhstan, in the Zerafshan valley of present-day Uzbekistan, for instance, while other groups, focused on other saintly ancestors, undoubtedly straddle the modern Soviet-defined borders that have now become international boundaries (the *Tārikh-i jadīdah-i Tāshkand* from the late 19th century, for instance, refers to the *shajaras* or *nasab-nāmas* preserved by descent groups linked to prominent saints of Tashkent such as Shaykh Khavand-i Tahur, Imam Qaffal Shashi, Zayn ad-Din Kuy-i ʿArifani, and Zangi Ata [MS IVANUz 7791, f. 935b]). A balanced assessment of such groups will depend on material, oral and written, gathered throughout Central Asia.

⁵⁴I have briefly discussed this phenomenon in “Yasavī Ṣayḥs in the Timurid Era: Notes on the Social and Political Role of Communal Sufi Affiliations in the 14th and 15th Centuries,” in *La civiltà timuride come fenomeno internazionale*, ed. Michele Bernardini [*Oriente Moderno* (Rome), N.S., 15 (76), no. 2 (1996)], 173–88.

⁵⁵See for example the classic studies of Ernest Gellner (*Saints of the Atlas* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969]); Vincent Crapanzano (*The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973], with special relevance to the healing functions often assumed by *khojas*); and Dale F. Eickelman (*Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976]). More recent contributions presenting conceptual models and comparative material that might well inform a closer study of Central Asian patterns include Edward B. Reeves, *The Hidden Government: Ritual, Clientelism, and Legitimation in Northern Egypt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), and the fascinating analysis of a saintly lineage and its sacralized history and genealogy in the context both of its role in an oasis-agricultural community and of its client relationships with nomadic neighbors, in Mondher Kilani, *La construction de la mémoire: Le lignage et la sainteté dans l'oasis d'El Ksar*, Religions en perspective (ed. Henry Pernet), no. 5 (Paris: Éditions Labor et Fides, 1992). Especially relevant for our purposes is the author's discussion of the interplay between “genealogical memory” and the documentary affirmation of the sacred lineage (pp. 219–44).

⁵⁶Mustafina, *Predstavleniia*, 76.

⁵⁷*Lamaḥāt*, MS SPFIVRAN C1602, ff. 100b–101b.